A MODERN APOSTLE

Servant of God

Archbishop George Matulaitis-Matulevicius

NIHIL OBSTAT

Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. P. Stoesser

IMPRIMATUR

Most Rev. Martin D. McMamara, D.D.

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The Servant of God

GEORGE MATULAITIS - MATULEVIČIUS, MIC.

Titular Archbishop of Aduli,

Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania,

Reformer of the Congregation of the Marian Fathers

of the Immaculate Conception of the

Blessed Virgin Mary

and

Founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Informative Process of Beatification of the Servant of God, Archbishop George MATULAITIS - MATULEVIČIUS began at Rome, Italy, on May 15, 1953. The supplementary ordinary processes were initiated and completed in five Dioceses: in Brooklyn, N. Y.; in Buffalo, N. Y.; in Scranton, Pa.; in Malines, Belgium; and in Lugano, Switzerland.

The Servant of God, Archbishop George died in the odor of sanctity at Kaunas, Lithuania, on January 27, 1927.

For seven years his body rested in the crypt of the Cathedral at Kaunas and in 1934 it was transferred to his native parish church of St. Michael the Archangel at Marijampolė, where numerous and signal graces, both spiritual and temporal, were obtained by the faithful who invoked his intercession. These favors, including some miraculous recoveries which were published in the local religious reviews, have been recorded by the Marian Fathers of Marijampolė.

With the beginning of his Beatification process many further graces were received and recoveries of health multiplied through his intercession.

During the twelve-month period from July 1954 to July 1955 seventy six cases were registered with the Delegate of the Postulator General in the United States of America. Here is one of the seventy six letters, written by Mrs. Eva Ma-us, a parishioner of Our Lady of Vilna parish, Chicago, Illinois.

"April 30, 1955.

"Rev. and dear Father:

"I am writing this to let you know that I obtained a miracle through the intercession of Rev. Fr. George Matulevičius. For many years I was afflicted with weakness and various ailments of my back. In the last few years they were severe and required medical attention. I received many treatments but without relief. Finally, I prayed fervently and

faithfully to our Father and promised to send a donation if he helped me. Since then, I required no more medical attention and my back does not ache any more. I am able to do strenuous work without any ill effects. Before, I had never been able to do this. I am enclosing a donation of 5 dollars which can be used to further the Cause of Father's Canonization..."

We read of a similar instance in "The Articles" which the Postulator General presented in 1953 to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal at Rome as part of the Informative Process for Beatification. There we find (n. 124) that the Reverend Ladislaus Polonskis, pastor of the parish at Veliuona, Lithuania, suffered many years from a acutely infected axillary fistula. Despite medical attention, no improvement was discernible. Fearing complications, the physicians did not try to stop the flow and to close the wound. Instead they left a kind

of drainage. The putrid abscess thus became chronic, and resisted every cure.

In October of 1934, on the occasion of the removal of the remains of the Servant of God, Archbishop George from Kaunas to Marijampolė, the Rev. L. Polonskis also took part in the solemn procession. He made the trip in spite of a more than usually painful condition of the fistula, riding, as it happened, on the same vehicle that transported the remains of the Venerable archbishop, and praying in secret to the Servant of God for a cure.

Having returned to his parish after two or three days, Rev. Polonskis noticed with great joy and surprise, as he was about to take his usual medication, that the wound was completely closed and dried. So sudden and thorough was the cure that he himself regarded it as miraculous. Moreover, as an acknowledgement of this supernatural favor from God through the intercession of Archbishop Matulaitis, Father Polonskis

entered the Marian Fathers' Congregation at Marijampolė in 1935.

In 1933 a certain Agatha Paltanavičiūtė, a domestic, felt protracted pains both in her head and in her eyes. Various treatments and even an operation proved of no avail; in the end her eyesight failed completely. Placing her trust in God through the intercession of His Servant Archbishop George, she began a novena of prayers at his tomb in Marijampolė. As she prayed there on the first Friday of 1938, she unexpectedly saw a light and, to her amazement, clearly discerned the sarcophagus of her venerated intercessor. This restoration of her sight was instant and lasting, and to give public expression of her gratitude to God and to the Servant of God for so great favor she had a pair of eyes fashioned of silver, and left them as an offering at the saintly Archbishop's tomb.

According to the attestation of the assistant - pastor of Marijampolė, Father Anthony Kazlauskas, M.I.C., a parishioner,

a certain Josiukas, was stricken with cancer of his cheek. After an exmination, the doctors decided that an immediate operation was necessary. To this the patient agreed, but first went to his parish church to pray at the tomb of the Servant of God, Archbishop Matulaitis, for the success of the impending operation. As he knelt at the tomb, he leaned his bandaged face close to the venerated sarcophagus in prayerful confidence. Thereafter, consoled and encouraged, he presented himself to the doctors. When these had removed his bandages they found to their great surprise instead of a marked cancer only a dry protuberance which now detached itself from the patient's cheek and fell to the ground. Both doctors and patient were convinced that the cure, instantaneous and perfect, was miraculous. This case was later published in the review "Šaltinis".

Before the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, there occurred more than 200 similar recoveries of health

through the intercession of the Servant of God Archbishop George, all of which were registered by the Marian Fathers of Marijampolė.

Lithuania at present is behind the "iron curtain" of Russian communism. It is impossible, therefore, to procure any documents or witnesses from there for presentation to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal. And since two proven miracles, accepted as such by the Church, must be presented in the Cause of Beatification of the Servant of God, Archbishop George, we ask that all reported cures be communicated to: POSTULAZIONE GENERALE DELLA CONGRAGAZIONE DEI CC. RR. MARIANI, Via Corsica 1. R O M A — Italy, or to the Delegate of the Postulator General: Rev. C. A. Matulaitis, M.I.C., MARIAN HILLS SEMINARY, CLARENDON HILLS, ILL.

THE MAIN EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF ARCHBISHOP GEORGE MATULAITIS - MATULEVIČIUS, M.I.C.

The Servant of God Archbishop George Matulaitis - Matulevičius was born on April 13, 1871 in the village of Lūginė, near the city of Marijampolė, Lithuania. Eight days after his birth he was baptized in the parish church of St. Michael the Archangel by the Superior General of the Order of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Very Reverend Father George Česna. He received the name George Boleslaus.

Lūginė was a picturesque farm village of 112 acres, situated three and half miles from the parish church at Marijampolė. His parents, Andrew and Ursula Matulaitis, were blessed with eight chuldren, five boys and three girls. George was the eighth and last child born to this pious couple. In 1874 George lost his father and, in 1881 his mother, leaving him at the age of ten, in the care of his eldest brother John.

In 1878, at the age of eight, he was enrolled at the elementary school of Marijampolė, each day walking the entire distance to and from school. In 1882 George passed the examination required for entrance into high school.

The long walks to school even in the worst weather, poor clothing, and impoverished conditions at home soon impaired his health and in 1888 there followed a long illness that confined him to bed for almost 18 months. What was more painful to him was the fact that his studies had to be discontinued. From his earliest years he had a sincere desire of becoming a priest, and though its prospects now seemed dim, nevertheless he clung to his hope through even the darkest hours.

George was not without the aid of Divine Providence. His uncle, John Matulaitis - Matulewicz, who taught classical languages in a secondary school in Kielce, Poland and the Russian language in the diocesan Seminary, while visiting his re-

latives in Lūginė, was persuaded of the vocation of his nephew, George. He proposed to take the young man to Kielce and to arrange for his studies at the Seminary at his own expense.

The offer was accepted by George's guardian and in 1891 the Servant of God joyfully entered the Seminary at Kielce. However, his new guardian altered the Lithuanian spelling of his nephew's name, Matulaitis, to Matulewicz as an expediency.

In 1893, the Russian Government suppressed the Seminary of Kielce because of its clerics were found wearing the state-prohibited scapular of the Sacred Heart. The Servant of God was then transferred to the archdiocesan Seminary of Warsaw. Here he gained distinction by his extraordinary abilities, his application to study, and especially by his virtue and affability.

In 1895, at the request of the Bishop of Kielce, he was admitted to the Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical Academy in St. Petersburg, where in June, 1899 he received

the degree of Master of Sacred Theology with the note: "Summa cum laude, note primus." He was ordained towards the end of his studies on December 31, 1898 by Bishop Niedzialkowski.

A recurrence of his malady, diagnosed as tuberculosis of the bone, caused the Servant of God to seek permission of his Bishop to go to Germany for bath cures. After a brief stay there, during which there was a general improvement in his health, he went to Switzerland for graduate theological studies at the University of Fribourg, where, in 1902, he received his degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology with the note "praeclarissime".

Upon his return to his own Diocese, he was appointed assistant in a small rural parish, a position which he held for only a short time. His bishop then sent him to the Seminary at Kielce as a professor of Canon Law and of Latin. Two years later he again became seriously ill, went to Warsaw and was hospitalized in a charitable in-

stitution of which he later became the chaplain. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart who conducted the institute soon felt the extraordinary spiritual influence of this holy priest.

With the cooperation of the noted sociologist, Reverend Marcellus Godlewski, the Servant of God established a Catholic Association of Workers and published a magazine "The Companion of Labor". He extended his apostolic activities to the university students, organizing an association called "Rebirth". For the priests and educated catholic laymen, he organized a "Week of Sociology" composed mainly of a series of lectures, given first at Warsaw, and later in Kaunas, Lithuania.

In 1907 Father George was called upon to be first to assume the new chair of sociology at the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg, the first such in the entire Russian empire. Two years later he was appointed to teach Dogmatic Theology and in 1911 he was promoted to the inspector-

ship or vice-directorship of the Academy.

At the same time the Servant of God, feeling a call to the religious life, turned to the Order of the Marian Fathers which was now almost completely suppressed by a decree of the Russian Government. He resolved heroically to restore the Order completely in secret. Having received permission from the Marian Fathers' sole survivor and Superior General, the Very Reverend Father Vincent Senkus, and furnished with a letter of recommendation from the local Bishop, Father George journeyed to Rome in 1909 to obtain from the Holy See the privilege of making his first religious vows privately and without having made the canonically required novitiate. His mission was a success, he took his first vows in the private oratory of Bishop Casimir Rūškys - Ruszkiewicz, while the Very Reverend Vincent Senkus and Father Fr. Būčys were witnesses to the simple ceremony.

Soon the two eminent priests, Father

Būčys and Father John Totoraitis, joined Father George. Meanwhile, the aged Superior General of the Marian Fathers, Father Senkus, passed away in April, 1911. The three remaining secretly professed members of the Community assembled in chapter the following July, elected Father George the Superior General of the Order.

His ecclesiastical superiors consenting, in 1911, the Servant of God went to Fribourg, Switzerland, and erected there the novitiate, which he called "House of Studies". In a short time it counted a number of excellent priests.

In 1913, at the invitation of the Lithuanian - American clergy, acompanied by Reverend Felix Kudirka and Reverend Julius Kazakas, he journeyed to the United States, where he erected a novitiate in Chicago, Illinois, and returned to Fribourg the same year.

In 1914 he conducted spiritual exercises for the clergy of Marijampolė in Lithuania. Being unable to return to Switzer-

land because of the First World War, Father George founded a Marian House and novitiate in 1915 at Bielany, near Warsaw, Poland. While, there, he also supervised and directed an orphanage caring for two-hundred boys.

On March first, 1918 he left Bielany for Marijampolė, whose parish was administered by the Marian Fathers. Here Father George reorganized the House, founded a novitiate, and witnessed the entrance of many candidates: priests and laymen.

During this time the Servant of God founded a new Community of religious women in honor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Constitution of which was approved by the bishop of Seinai on October 15, 1918.

On October 23, 1918 His Holiness Pope Benedict XV named Father George residential Bishop of Vilnius. After his consecration in Kaunas on December 1, 1918, he made his solemn entrance into the

Cathedral of Vilnius and took possession of the Diocese on December 8, 1918.

During a seven year period, the Vilnius city administration changed hands six times: from German to Lithuanian, to Russian communist, to Polish occupation. Under difficult and dangerous conditions the Bishop suffered repeated searchings, every kind of molestation, calumny, and persecution. All of this was overcome by the virtue of his blameless life.

When a concordat was established between the Holy See and the Polish Government in 1925, the Servant of God presented his petition for resignation to Pope Pius XI, who on July 14, 1925 graciously fulfilled his Servant's wish.

Freed of his other duties, the Servant of God went to Rome and, first having obtained approval of the Holy Father, who, on September 1, 1925 also elevated him to the dignity of titular Archbishop of Aduli, dedicated himself to the greater welfare of his own Congregation, the Marian Fathers.

Before many months passed, Archbishop George again had to leave the affairs of his new Congregation to accept the nomination by Pius XI as Apostolic Visitator to Lithuania on December 7, 1925.

The Servant of God labored assiduously at a very delicate problem: to restore order in Lithuanian ecclesiastical affairs, and to prepare a definite plan for the creation of a Lithuanian Ecclesiastical Province, all of which he accomplished most satisfactorily. The Ecclesiastical Province was juridically erected by the Pontifical Constitution called "Lituanorum Gente" of April 4, 1926.

Archbishop George visited the United States the second time in 1926, attending the 28th International Eucharistic Congress in Chicago. This afforded him the opportunity of visiting the Marian Houses he had established since 1913, as well as many lithuanian parishes throughout the United States, where he was received with great joy and affection. During his stay in the United States, he visited 88 Lith-

uanian parishes, delivered over 200 addresses, and spent much time with his growing Community.

After completing a three-month preaching and speaking schedule throughout the United States, he returned to Kaunas, Lithuania, on September 13, 1926.

The last four months of his earthly existence he spent in the routine of visiting pastors of churches and Catholic institutions in the newly formed dioceses in Lithuania. But his most important work was the preparation of a Concordat to ease and regulate the relations between the Holy See and the Lithuanian Government. He sent the completed report to Rome on January 20, 1927, and before he could begin preparing for his return to Rome, he fell gravely ill with acute appendicitis. After submitting to an unsuccessful operation, entirely resigned to the will of God and strengthened by the last Sacraments of the Church, he passed into eternity at

3:45 a. m. January 27, 1927 in Kaunas, Lithuania, being nearly 56 years of age.

The solemn funeral took place in the Cathedral of Kaunas attended by the Lithuanian Episcopate, the Community of the Marian Fathers, the local clergy, the President of Lithuania, various Ministers of State and thousands of the faithful. His venerable remains were temporarily entombed in the crypt of the Cathedral.

The mortal remains of the Servant of God had further solemn obsequies when, on October 24, 1934, they were taken from the Cathedral and transferred to the city of Marijampolė, a distance of 31 miles, to his own parish church, where he was baptized in 1871.

The following day, October 25, after the solemn funeral rites, his venerable remains were entombed in a sarcophagus of polished rose granite in the side chapel of the Sacred Heart under the constant vigilance of the Marian Fathers who care for the parish.

PRAYER

for the

Beatification and Canonization
of the Servant of God,

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE

O Most holy and indivisible Trinity, Who in life makest Thy abode in the hearts of those who serve Thee faithfully, we humbly beseech Thee that Thy servant, Archbishop GEORGE, who, with the help of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, has served Thy Church with apostolic zeal, through her intercession be crowned soon with the aureole of the saints. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be...

At the presen
Provinces of the M
ation in the United
of St. Casimir with the provincial offices at 2327 West 23rd Place, Chicago 8, Illinois and 2) the Province of St. Stanislaus Kostka having its provincial offices at Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, in conformity with the decrees of Urbon VIII respecting the canonization of saints, and the beatification of the Blessed, I do not intend to give to facts or expressions contained in this book, particularly such expressions as "saint", "sanctity", "miracle" any other sense than that authorized by the Church, to whose judgement I gladly submit in advance.

Casimir A. Matulaitis, MIC.